REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for the careful consideration given the present application. The application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action, and amended as necessary to more clearly and particularly describe the subject matter that Applicants regard as the invention.

Claims 1–13 are amended and claims 14–18 are newly introduced and fully supported by the specification as originally filed. The specification is also amended to correct minor informalities and to restore a correct translation of the French term "parallèle" (in French priority document).

The drawings are objected to under 37 CFR 1.83(a) for not showing every feature as recited in the claims, and in particular, claim 2. Claim 2 has been amended to more clearly depict or illustrate the drawings as originally filed. Therefore, withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

The specification is objected to for informalities, and in particular for not including the appropriate headings for each section. Accordingly, the specification has been amended. Thus, withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

Claims 1–13 are objected to for informalities. In particular, the claims do not begin with the appropriate articles ("a" or "the"). The claims have been amended accordingly; thus withdrawal of the objection is respectfully requested.

Claims 2, 3, 5, 6 and 8–10 are rejected under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. The claims have been amended to correct the noted deficiencies. Therefore, withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 1–13 are rejected to under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Lemercier (U.S. Patent No. 4,055,464). Withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested for at least the following reasons. Regarding claim 1, Lemercier does not disclose a sealing joint comprising an external metal casing (1) and a flexible internal structure, characterized in that the internal structure is made of flexible strips (8, 8a, 8b, 8c, 8d), overlaid and separated by supports (9, 9a, 9b, 9c, 9d), the supports located on either side of the strips being staggered, wherein the supports comprise blocks which are laid out in rows such that each block occupies every other space between the strips and in a direction perpendicular to the rows and wherein the blocks are present at every second row. As recited in claim 8, Lemercier also does not teach a sealing joint comprising an external metal casing having a flexible internal structure made of flexible, corrugated flexible strips, the strips contacting at support points located on either side of the strip being staggered. Rather, Lemercier discloses mesh elements (6) fitting spaces between small plates 7 and is silent on the positions or relative arrangement of the mesh elements. More specifically, the plates (7) in do not contact each other at support points.

Furthermore, randomly distributed mesh elements appear to be employed in Lemercier. That is, "flexible packing is constituted by a stack of wire fabric, wire mesh, or interloped wire elements or by means of a packing of steel wool or shavings." (col. 1, ll. 30–32). The random distribution or lack of organization of the mesh elements means that the compressive loads are transmitted evenly in the seal and the small plates 7 are not substantially deformed though regarded as flexible. The deformation in Lemercier is distributed within the mesh elements which deform individually or slide upon one another. The Lemercier arrangement is likely to remain deformed permanently without recovering its original shape after having been compressed. Moreover, the Lemercier arrangement as disclosed has little resilience.

Contrary to Lemercier and according to the recited arrangement as claimed, the plates are free to flex between supports alternating on either side, and therefore the sealing joint remains resilient even after high compressive loads or high deflections were imparted to the seal. In particular, the flexible strips absorb the compressive energy and consume the compression but recover their original shape when the compression stops. The supports are substantially not deformed. Therefore, Lemercier does not teach each and every element of claims 1–13 (or new claims 14–18 which depend from claim 8).

In light of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance and notice to that effect is hereby requested. If it is determined that the application is not in condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to initiate a telephone interview with the undersigned attorney to expedite prosecution of the present application.

If there are any additional fees resulting from this communication, please charge same to our Deposit Account No. 16-0820, our Order No. 38469.

Respectfully submitted,
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